**Chapter 3. Artistic construct**

**Literati gatherings as constructed in paintings**

In Chapter 1, I discussed the themes of two paintings – *Literati Gathering* and *Qin Listening*. These paintings depict ordinary activities at actual literati gatherings. Yi Ruofen and Wang Cheng-hua write masterfully on the political aspects of the two paintings.[[1]](#footnote-3) I limit my inquiry here to investigating how the two paintings and their associated colophon poems were constructed artistically, visually, verbally, prosodically, and melodically. I analyse the two paintings to reconstruct the sequence of artistic activities they represent, as they provide some direct and rare evidence of the ephemeral artistic practices that were fundamental to the scholar-artist community’s sense of self. Being static in nature, it is not easy to express the unfolding of a sequence of events in paintings unless they are presented as a sequence of separate pictures like a comic strip. How can we extract evidence of the ephemeral practices of the scholar-artists depicted in the two paintings?

The implied sequence of artistic activities in a literary gathering

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that the protagonists in *Literati Gathering* first enjoyed *qin* music, then put away the *qin*, which is shown unwrapped on a piece of cloth in the painting, before moving to the larger table to enjoy their banquet. Alcohol and tea are served, while at the same time, they enjoy the fragrance from the flowers, the fumes from the aromatic substances, and the tea.

The gathering depicted in the painting is a political symbol.[[2]](#footnote-4) The two colophon poems by Huizong and Cai Jing reiterate the relationship between the *literati* gathering in the painting and similar occasions hosted by Tang Taizong. The eighteen scholars who served as Tang Taizong’s learned consultants were the fruit of the Emperor’s efforts to recruit talented people to serve in the court – the centre of state power. The ability to recruit and gather so many erudite scholars reflected the Emperor’s reputation, power, and authority. The reference to Yan Liben’s *Portraits of the Eighteen Scholars* under Tang Taizong’s patronage underscores the Emperor's determination to recruit talents.[[3]](#footnote-5) Huizong used the *Literati Gathering* and its colophon poem to express this ambition. His learned Grand Counsellor echoes him in expressing a similar political agenda while mirroring the rhymes and tonalpattern of the first poem as an act of deference to his Emperor’s literary tastes. Cai also seizes the opportunity to flatter Huizong by claiming that Huizong surpassed Tang Taizong.

The sequence of activities implied in the *Qin Listening* is subtly presented. Most scholars focus on the *qin* playing and listening activities and ignore the tea gathering that follows. They have also failed to consider the evidence pointing to the likely order of *qin* melodies played at the elegant gathering. While these are implied in Cai’s poem, the painting must be understood in the context of a deeper interpretation of his poem, which describes three types of *qin* melody that are presumably played in the painting: *yín* (melody with chanting), *diao* (an abbreviated form of *diaozi*), and *nong* (an abbreviated form of *caonong*, which can be divided into major and minor *caonong*).[[4]](#footnote-6) Thus the first four characters in the first line, “*yín zhi diao shang*,” should be translated as “[a *qin* melody with] chanting in the key of *zhi*, [a *qin* melody called] *diao* in thekey of *shang*”. The characters *yín* and *diao* are not verbs[[5]](#footnote-7) but are names of *qin* melodies with lyrics that can be sung. The *Zuiweng* *yín* (*Chant of the Drunken Old Man*) is an obvious example of the *yín* type of *qin* melody. *Diaozi* and *caonong* appear in the *qin* textbook *Zequan’s Techniques* authored by Zequan and others. According to Cao Zhi, an esteemed *qin* teacher in service to the royal family who wrote the preface of the *qin* textbook, *diaozi* should be played first and *caonong* last.[[6]](#footnote-8)

Because the rhythm of the *diaozi* is slow, it garners the listeners’ attention at the beginning of the performance. It is simple, but not uninteresting, like eating olives, as Cheng Yujian puts it.[[7]](#footnote-9) After the player had had a break and enough warm-up exercises had been performed, the minor and the major *caonong* were to be played.[[8]](#footnote-10) This was the climax of the performance. The *caonong* had to be inspiring, invigorating, and exhilarating. However, as theorised in Zhu Changwen’s Qin *History* and as echoed by many other prominent scholar-artists, the emotional effect of *caonong* was supposed to be harmonious and restrained.[[9]](#footnote-11) Cao Zhi and Cheng Yujian agreed, and they emphasised that the player should not perform more than one *caonong* at this stage. His task was to impress the listeners by playing only one piece.[[10]](#footnote-12)

Cai Jing would definitely have understood this sequence and incorporated it into his poem. *Yín* and *diao* are played and sung with lyrics. They appear in the first line of the poem, while the *nong* appears in the final line, bringing the literary gathering to its climax. This climax, different from the exciting climaxes attained with other musical instruments, is achieved by playing a stringless *qin*, which was believed to be the highest form of performance. Cai might have been a *qin* lover, and his familiarity with the *qin* melodies might have resulted from extensive reading of the *qin* books in circulation at the time, including, perhaps, *Zequan’s Techniques*.

The tonal pattern of the poem also serves as another clue to better understand Cai’s poem, though this is very difficult to convey in translation. When we look at the — | tonalpattern of the poem in Chapter 1, the characters of *yín* and *diao* are marked with (—) and (|). This means that characters in these positions occasionally deviate from the stipulated tonalpattern.[[11]](#footnote-13) Originally the tonalpattern for the first four characters was “| | — —”; the second and fourth characters were supposed to follow this prosodic rule, while the rule for the first and third characters was not as strict. A serious poet who cared about the tonalpattern would “correct” a departure from the tonal rule with another departure. Hence, if he deviated from the rule by using a level-toned character for the first, that is (—), he would change the third character to (|). In this way, by what we will call “reverse rescue”, the poet can achieve a prosodic balance in the tonal pattern.

In Cai’s poem, we see this “reverse rescue” pattern twice, both in the “*yín zhi diao shang*” phrase and in the “*yang kui di shen*” phrase (the first four characters) of the third line. In Huizong’s poem on the *Literati Gathering*, we see the use of the same pattern in the phrases “*duo shi zuo xin*” and “*hua tu you xi*” (first four characters) in the last two lines. These two poets achieved a prosodic balance by coupling the “reverse rescue” patterns. As a result, the third character of the first line of Cai’s Qin *Listening* poem should be read as an obliquetone. The character “*diao*” has two tones: one is read as the level-toned “*dew*” (Middle or Medieval period Chinese) or “*tiáo*” (Modern Chinese) as a verb meaning “tuning” or “adjusting,” or the oblique-toned “*tew*” or “*diào*” as a noun meaning “a tune or melody.”[[12]](#footnote-14) It is thus more likely that as a serious poet, Cai chose the oblique tone to reversely rescue the tonal pattern. Thus the third character of the line should be read as a noun, meaning the *diaozi* melody.

One may counter-argue that the “*nong*” in the last line refers to any *qin* melody as it is sometimes used as a generic name for any *qin* melody category. Why did Cai not use “*yín zhi nong shang*”, “*yín zhi* *yîn shang*”, or “*yín zhi cao* (oblique-toned) *shang*” in the first line, and “*wuxian yidiao zhong*”, “*wuxian yiyîn zhong*”, or “*wuxian yiqu zhong*” which also match the tonal pattern? The answer is that Cai’s poem consciously reflects the proper sequence of *qin* melodies to be played, as discussed above.

The keys of the *yín* and *diaozi* were just as significant to the emotions Cai expresses in the poem. It seems that Cai relied on Zequan and others’ interpretations of the Five Pitches, where the *zhi* pitch represents slow and lamenting sounds, while the *shang* pitch represents pure and sharp sounds with short-ending rhymes.[[13]](#footnote-15) The player begins by performing a *yín* melody and singing a slow and lamenting song in the key of *zhi*, which attracts the listeners’ attention as if to call together the *qin* gathering. Then the player turns to the key of *shang*, performs a *diaozi* melody, and sings another song with a completely different emotional tone. The tones and lyrics are pure and sharp, and a shorter and speedy rhythm is adopted. The emotions conveyed are, therefore, uplifting. The performance’s varying tonal and emotional impact would have captured the listeners’ attention.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the “pine wind” sweeping through the pine grove might refer to a *qin* melody called *Feng ru song* or the sound of boiling water for making tea. Now that we see how Cai incorporated the *qin* melodies into his poem without ever mentioning the word *qin* at all, we are all the more inclined to believe that he would show off his literary prowess by finding a way to mention tea without actually referring to it. This way of analogising “tea” was widely shared among the scholar-artists if we recall Pi Rixiu’s and Su Shi’s poems cited in Chapter 1.[[14]](#footnote-16)

All in all, the sequence of the activities implied in *Qin Listening* now becomes clear:

1. When the guests settled down, the *yín* and *diaozi* were played and sung;
2. The guests perceive the subtle sound of boiling water for making tea. Rather than a disturbance, it is a pleasant sound signifying elegant activities to come;
3. The guests respond in different ways – they observe, contemplate, their hearts brim with sentiments, and they are impressed by the skill of the player;
4. The gathering reaches a climax when a *caonong* melody is played on a stringless *qin* – the pinnacle of a *qin* performance.

Cai skillfully flattered the player by incorporating many allusions into the poem, proof of his high literary ability and knowledge of *qin* music. If we look closely at the *qin* in the painting, there are seven strings depicted as white lines (fig. 1.2c).[[15]](#footnote-17) A closer investigation of the *qin*, aided by infrared photography, should be conducted to reveal the white strings clearly. By mentioning the “stringless *qin*,” Cai might simply have been incorporating an allusion into his poem instead of describing what he actually saw and heard. If there are, in fact, seven strings depicted on the *qin*, Cai’s “stringless *qin*” was undoubtedly a form of flattery.

More importantly, *Qin* *Listening* expresses that the Emperor and his Grand Counsellor worked closely by complementing each other as they jointly promoted their political agendas and artistic ideals. Knowledge of the *qin* like Cai’s was widely disseminated among other members of the royal family and other political and cultural elites, as is evident from the royal *qin* curriculum of Zequan and Cao Zhi. Cai would have had access to a large and knowledgeable audience viewing *Qin Listening*. Who else could have merited Cai’s flattery in the colophon poem but Huizong? Huizong also prized Cai’s calligraphy, which is why his poem occupies pride of place above the pine tree in the painting.

Given the evidence presented above, *Qin Listening*, like *Literati Gathering*, reveals the political significance of *literati* gatherings in that they are associated with the Emperor’s agenda of recruiting talent to serve in the government. The court painters were tasked with rendering the political agenda in pictorial form, and Huizong and Cai Jing contributed their small but significant parts to make this agenda all the more explicit.

Moreover, the political-artistic significance of using the *-uwng* rhyme was probably essential to the composition of the three poems, a point that seems to be lost on most scholars who overlook the significance of using this rhyme scheme in the two politicised paintings. The *-uwng* is the first rhyme listed in the government-authorised system of the *Widened Rhymes*.[[16]](#footnote-18) Given the political associations of the rhyme dictionaries and the political messages promoted in the paintings, it would not be far-fetched to say that the rhyme in the *Literati Gathering* poems was chosen with great care and that it was by no means a random act that Cai used the same rhyme in his poem in *Qin Listening*. Cai’s poem did not merely pay tribute to the poems on *Literati Gathering* but reiterated the importance of rhyme resonation, the expression of sounds, and, thus, the official regulation of sounds, as we recall from the discussion of the compilation of rhyme categories in Chapter 1. The official regulation of sounds correlated with the re-adjustment of the music system and the new interpretations of the tea and fragrance cultures, which were also targets of Huizong and Cai’s politicisation of artistic practices.

Does *Qin Listening* depict a *Leiqin*? Assuming that the player depicted in the painting is of high status with superior taste and cultural knowledge, the possibility exists that he is playing a *Leiqin*. There is also a possibility that he was playing a *qin* called “Spring Thunder”, which was claimed by Zhou Mi to be the star of the Xuanhe Palace collection.[[17]](#footnote-19) We may never know which *qin* is depicted in the two paintings. At any rate, they might likely have been antiques passed down from the Tang period that eventually came to the collections of the cultural elite and the Emperor. The Dragon’s Roar *qin* in the Freer Gallery collection proves that the Northern Song *qin* resembled Tang *qin* in design. We can see that the player and guests sit relatively close to one another in *Qin* *Listening*, indicating that the *qin* music was not loud.[[18]](#footnote-20) In the world of the painting and beyond, spatial proximity is assured between the host and the guests while they share the same sensorial experiences and similar interpretations of cultural practices performed together.

If the *qin* player and the sitting officials depicted in *Qin Listening* drank tea after the *qin concertino*, which was highly likely, the narrative hidden in the painting would be fascinating. They would have experienced two different kinds of fragrances. Firstly, they would have smelled the mixed fragrance of the blossoming jasmine and the burning aromatic substances in the incense burner. Their seats were not far from one another, so they could easily smell the first kind of fragrance. Second, when the *qin* performance was over and tea was being served, an additional scent, that of whisked tea, would have pervaded the air, blended with the lingering scent from the aromatic substance in the burner and the jasmine. Alternatively, if the aromatic substance had completely burned off, the host may have told his servants to replace it with other aromatic substances, the fumes of which would then mingle with that of the tea. This would impress his guests with another olfactory experience. We may never know with certainty what was occurring in the depiction, but it is clear that the painting has many subtle layers of meaning. The painting reveals ephemeral practices and a mixed mode of sensorial experiences.

Tea gatherings in other paintings

In Li Gonglin’s famous painting of his stately garden in Anhui Tongcheng, *Painting of the Villa in the Longmian Mountain* (*Longmian Shanzhuang tu*; hereafter “*Mountain Villa*”), we see a different aspect of the *literati* gatherings. Robert Harrist’s book, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-century China*, is a detailed and comprehensive study of several different copies of the *Mountain Villa*.[[19]](#footnote-21) We will focus on the one held in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum. Scenes that depict tea preparation, tea drinking, and the burning of aromatic substances can be found in various sections of this long horizontal handscroll, including the sections of the Cave of Extending Blossoms, Lingling Valley, Jade Dragon Gorge, the Cliff of the Avalokiteśvara-Bodhisattva, Surpassing Gold Cliff, and the Hall of Ink Meditation.[[20]](#footnote-22)

Three figures, all scholars judging from their appearance, sit in the Cave of Extending Blossoms. Beside them are three tea cups (fig. 3.1a and fig. 3.1b). They are obviously enjoying some tea. On the riverbank of the Lingling Valley, a servant is carefully holding a tea cup in his hands, getting ready to present it to a sitting scholar (fig. 3.1c). In Jade Dragon Gorge and Cliff of the Avalokiteśvara-Bodhisattva (fig. 3.1d), there are four important characters, three sitting scholars and one Buddhist monk, waiting for their cups of tea, which three servants prepare. One is attending to a stove, which is used for boiling water.

On the platform of the Surpassing Gold Cliff, a group of people sits around a tripod. We can suppose that an aromatic substance is burning inside (fig. 3.1e). Next to the platform, three servants are preparing food and beverages. In the Hall of Ink Meditation, two scholars are copying what may presumably be Buddhist sutras while aromatic substances are burning in tripods between them. The stove is heated, and tea is ready to be served (fig. 3.1f). The Confucian scholars and Buddhist monks depicted in the scroll enjoy tea and the fragrances of burning aromatic substances while going about their scholarly and leisure activities, such as conversing in caves, gazing into the water in quiet contemplation, meditating, and copying sutras.

The *Mountain Villa* presents, as Harrist argues, the private lives of the scholar-artists and monks.[[21]](#footnote-23) Tea and aromatic substances were originally materials with no cultural and artistic significance, but the scholar-artists invested them with significance and made them into culturally and artistically attractive products. While the painters of the *Literati Gathering* and *Qin Listening* were interested in using tea, aromatic substances, and *qin* as vehicles for political propaganda, Li Gonglin constructed tea and aromatic substances as necessary objects for private scholarly and leisure activities. This connected the scholar-artists and the monks in their pleasant *literati* gatherings.

Zhang Zeduan’s scroll, *Painting of the Riverside Scenes in the Qingming Festival* (*Qingming Shanghe tui*; hereafter “*Qingming* scroll”), also in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum, illustrates the hustle and bustle of a prosperous city in which tea and aromatic substances are sold and enjoyed on site (fig. 3.2).[[22]](#footnote-24) Several sections of this long handscroll show the shops that sell tea and aromatic substances. This is a centre of worldly activities, unlike the private, reclusive garden depicted in the *Mountain Villa*.[[23]](#footnote-25) The atmosphere of drinking tea depicted in the *Qingming* scroll drastically differs from that in the *Mountain Villa*. We do not know what type of tea was sold in the shops, but these people probably would not have engaged in the complex seven-stage tea whisking procedure described in Chapter 1.

The themes of the above paintings and the agendas behind their production constitute a wide artistic range in which tea and aromatic substances played an important role. Tea could be drunk alone or with a group of people, by ordinary people, porters, or political and cultural elites. The social strata and number of drinkers did not change tea as a raw material but certainly determined how tea was stored, prepared, presented, and drunk. Here it is the artistic expressions, the paintings, that construct the environment in which the tea is enjoyed. Tea is sold and drunk as a daily beverage in an ordinary street setting. However, in special settings, like the private garden in the Literati Gathering, Qin Listening, and Mountain Villa, the participants are surrounded by beautiful landscapes and tea drinking is transformed into a cultural and artistic ideal. The practice of drinking tea was codified as an enjoyment of scholars and monks. Other decoctions (except alcoholic beverages) were unwelcome and inappropriate in these settings. The enjoyment of tea, aided by the aromatic substances and the *qin*, thus occupied an essential part of the *literati* gatherings. Each gathering further internalised and reinforced the positions of these objects and practices in the lives of the scholar-artists and their social bonding. In this sense, the paintings help establish their cultural and artistic status and influence.

Tomb murals

If a tea drinker died, his tea, utensils, and servants would be sent off with him into the underworld. This practice is evident in scenes from murals in tombs found in the Hebei and Henan areas.[[24]](#footnote-26) We will focus on the cemeteries in the Hebei Xuanhua region that belonged to the Khitans in the eleventh century. Murals depicting tea preparation and serving are found in the tombs of Zhang Kuangzheng (M10, completed in 1093, see fig. 3.3), Zhang Wenzao (M7, completed in 1093), and others.[[25]](#footnote-27) Crushers, bowls, ewers, and other objects such as flowers, special rocks resembling those from Lake Tai, writing tools, musical instruments, presumably Buddhist sutras, cranes, horses, and camels are shown in the murals. Guards, maid-servants, children, procession teams, and banquet attendants are shown actively interacting with these objects.[[26]](#footnote-28) The objects in the murals may depict the interred’s favourite personal effects during life; the people represent the deceased’s servants, and the deceased’s animals are also shown. Just as likely, the mural painters might have followed the then popular and prevailing painting themes. Cranes, rocks, sutras, and tea and utensils were rare and precious objects, while the animals and humans were underworld servants protecting and serving the tomb occupants. The depiction of writing tools probably signifies that the tomb occupants were scholars or members of the cultural elite. The multiple sets of tea and banquet utensils depicted in the murals in various tombs also mean that large parties were believed to be held in the underworld. Such opulent tombs were evidently not for people of low rank.

There were no significant differences in the use of tea and utensils between the Khitans and Chinese, as similar depictions and carvings from the eleventh century have been found in the Henan region.[[27]](#footnote-29) The Khitan servants, either living or depicted in the Xuanhua murals, probably did not whisk the tea in seven stages, but they crushed the tea, probably into powder form, and used ewers with specially designed spouts and bowls with pedestals very similar to those used by the Chinese. As depicted in the Xuanhua murals, the ways of preparing tea, holding tea bowls, and presenting tea resemble what is done in Li Gonglin’s painting and the *Literati Gathering*. The servants are not depicted adding fruits into the tea or mixing the tea with salt or ginger, practices to which Su Che took strong exception.[[28]](#footnote-30) Instead, if the servants’ Khitan hairstyles were not shown and the cemeteries were located further to the south, it would be difficult to tell whether the tombs belonged to the Khitan or the Chinese.

**Forming their own visual language**

Despite their shared themes of tea and *literati* gatherings, the styles and agendas of the paintings and murals discussed above differed. The Xuanhua mural painters paid particular attention to the details of the dress and ornaments of the servants and gathering attendants. Their colourful dress, hats, hairstyles, and belts reflect how careful the painters were to reconstruct the material luxuriousness and status of the tomb occupants and the circles with which they were associated. Tea utensils in multiple sets, decorations, special rocks, and precious animals repeatedly appeared in different occupants’ tombs. Meanwhile, to show the prosperity of the city he was depicting, Zhang Zeduan chose to include tea shops and aromatic substances on sale in the market. For his part, Li Gonglin paid particular attention to the landscape of his garden and the emotions evoked. Material luxury was not his concern (he was rich enough to own such an enormous garden). The artistic space in which pleasant private gatherings were held was sophisticatedly constructed. The Xuanhua painters could not construct the artistic space in one scroll, as they had to set their paintings onto the walls of the tombs. The painters of the *Literati Gathering* and *Qin Listening* took all of these concerns into consideration. They attended to the materiality of the dress, ornaments, and utensils used by the host and guests of the gathering to show off their status and power. They deliberately created gardens that appeared austere but pleasant. Unlike the painters of long handscrolls and murals, they could not clearly delineate a narrative of the gatherings in the static medium of the handscroll. The most they could do was capture one moment of the gathering. The painters ingeniously used the unattended *qin*, aided by Huizong and Cai Jing’s colophon poems, to imply a sequence of the activities. The progress of a *literati* gathering was thus successfully presented. The painters affiliated with the prosperous cities of Xuanhua and Tongcheng exhausted almost all the forms and painting techniques available at that time to create representations of the pleasant gatherings in which tea, aromatic substances, and music played vital roles.[[29]](#footnote-31)

It is impossible to overstate the contribution of the ephemeral practices of preparing and drinking tea, burning aromatic substances, and listening to music to the artistic construction of *literati* gatherings. Simultaneously the materials, including tea, aromatic substances, and the *qin*, provided an opportunity for the scholar-artists to project their cultural ideals onto their paintings that were understood, appreciated, and adopted by their commissioners, partners, colleagues, disciples, and supporters. Their paintings codified the artistic significance of tea, aromatic substances, music, and the ephemeral practices behind them. The scholar-artists thus formed their own visual language within their circles.

**Tea in literary works**

The ephemeral arts were important subjects in Northern Song literary works, including poetry, essays, and songs. In the following section, we investigate how they are represented in those literary works that aim at self-expression and others intended for exchanges among the scholar-artists. These literary works are artistic constructs that define the roles of the three types of ephemeral arts.

Allusions

Since tea-tipping and tea contests only became popular during the Northern Song period and fell out of fashion after the Southern Song, poems that mentioned tea-tippingand tea contests are an artistic signature of these periods. Allusions and metaphors related to tea-tipping and tea contests frequently appeared in the literary works of these periods. The poems of Fan Zhongyan, a famous scholar-official, were among the early Northern Song poems establishing how allusions to tea contests should be produced. This poem was written in reply to Zhang Min, Fan’s associate in the office, in around 1034, when Fan became the governor of Muzhou. Zhang’s original poem was entitled *Song of Tea Contests*. Fan’s riposte poem, which is better known, is cited below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **范仲淹《和章岷從事鬥茶歌》[[30]](#footnote-32)** | **Fan Zhongyan, *Resonating with the Mayor’s Associate, Zhang Min’s Song of Tea Contests*** |
| 年年春自東南來 (-*oj*)  — — — | — — — | Every year spring comes from the southeast; |
| 建溪先暖冰微開 (-*oj*)  | — — | — — — | Jian Creek is the first to become warm, and the ice there begins to melt. |
| 溪邊奇茗冠天下  — — — | | — | | Unique tea bushes grow beside the Creek, surpassing all others in the world. |
| 武夷仙人從古栽 (-*oj*)  | — — — — | — | The Wuyi immortals planted them in ancient times. | 4 |
| 新雷昨夜發何處 (-*o*)  — — | | | — | | From where did the new thunderclaps come last night? |
| 家家嬉笑穿雲去 (-*o*)  — — — | — — | | Laughing gleefully, [tea farmers] of every family penetrated the clouds [i.e., went to the mountains]. |
| 露芽錯落一番榮  | — | | | — — | Splendid [tea bushes] are dotted with dews and buds. |
| 綴玉含珠散嘉樹 (-*u*)  | | — — | — | | Jade pendants and pearls hang on auspicious trees. | 8 |
| 終朝采掇未盈襜 (-*em*)  — — | | | — — | After a morning’s picking, there is not enough tea to fill one’s apron. |
| 唯求精粹不敢貪 (-*om*)  — — — | | | — | They look only for the elite and dare not be greedy. |
| 研膏焙乳有雅制  — — | | | | | | The process of grinding the paste and brewing [and stirring] the foam is sophisticated. |
| 方中圭兮圓中蟾 (-*em*)  — — — — — — — | Jade tablets within the square [tea cakes] and toads within the round [disks]. | 12 |
| 北苑將期獻天子 (-*ij*)  | | — — | — | | [Before] offering the Beiyuan tea to His Majesty as they are expected to, |
| 林下雄豪先鬥美 (-*ij*)  — | — — — | | | prominent figures in the woods compete for the comeliness [of tea]. |
| 鼎磨雲外首山銅1  | — — | | — — | Bronze cauldrons and grinders made of copper from Mount Shou beyond the clouds; |
| 瓶攜江上中泠水2 (-*ij*)  — — — | — — | | jars containing the Zhongling water from the [Yangtze] River. | 16 |
| 黃金碾畔綠塵飛 (-*ɨj*)  — — | | | — — | Green dust is winnowed from the gold crusher; |
| 碧玉甌中翠濤起 (-*ij*)  | | — — | — | | green waves float in the bluish-green-jade bowls. |
| 鬥餘味兮輕醍醐  | — | — — — — | Competing for the lingering taste [of tea], they dismiss that of good beer; |
| 鬥餘香兮薄蘭芷 (-*ij*)  | — — — | — | | vying for the lingering scent, they disdain that of orchid and angelica. | 20 |
| 其間品第胡能欺 (-*i*)  — — | | — — — | How is one to cheat on the grading and ranking [of tea], |
| 十目視而十手指 (-*ij*)  | | | — | | | | [while] numerous eyes are keeping watch and numerous fingers are pointing? |
| 勝若登仙不可攀  | | — — | | — | Winners are like immortals, too noble [for the commoners] to cling to; |
| 輸同降將無窮恥 (-*ij*)  — — — | — — | | losers are like capitulating commanders; what a shame! | 24 |
| 籲嗟天產石上英 (-*aeng*)  | — — | | | — | Alas, the elite [tea] that grows on the rocks is nature’s bounty. |
| 論功不愧階前蓂 (-*eng*)  | — | | — — — | In terms of its merits, it is not inferior to the auspicious grass in front of the Emperor’s seat. |
| 眾人之濁我可清 (-*eng*)  | — — | | | — | I can be pure among the impure. |
| 千日之醉我可醒 (-*eng*)  — | — | | | | | I can be awakened after thousands of days of drunkenness. | 28 |
| 屈原3試與招魂魄  | — | | — — | | Qu Yuan attempted to invoke the souls. |
| 劉伶4卻得聞雷霆 (-*eng*)  — — | | — — — | Liu Ling was able to hear the claps of thunder. |
| 盧仝敢不歌5  — — | | — | How could Lu Tong not sing? |
| 陸羽須作經 (-*eng*)  | | — | — | Lu Yu had to compose the *Classic of Tea*. | 32 |
| 森然萬象中  — — | | — | Within the myriad of all splendid things, |
| 焉知無茶星 (-*eng*)  — — — — — | how is one to tell that there is no constellation of tea? |
| 商山丈人6休茹芝 (-*i*)  — — | — — — — | The four old men from Mount Shang should not eat mushrooms anymore. |
| 首陽先生7休采薇 (-*ɨj*)  | — — — — | — | Neither should the two gentlemen from Mount Shouyang gather ferns. | 36 |
| 長安酒價8減百萬  — — | | | | | | The price of beer in Chang’an will drop by millions. |
| 成都藥市9無光輝 (-*ɨj*)  — — | | — — — | The medicine market in Chengdu will lose its lustre. |
| 不如仙山一啜好  | — — — | | | | [All these] cannot compare to one sip [of tea] from the mountains of the immortal, |
| 泠然便欲乘風飛 (-*ɨj*)  — — | | — — — | [which is] as pleasantly cool as riding on the wind to fly. | 40 |
| 君莫羨花間女郎只鬥草  — | | — — | — | | | | Do not envy those ladies among the flowers, who competed [with others] only with plants; |
| 贏得珠璣滿斗歸 (-*ɨj*)  — | — — | | — | You should win [the tea contests and] carry home a full pack of pearls. |
|  | The words “來, 開, 栽” belong to the -*oj* rhyme (*huiyun*).  “處, 去” -*o* rhyme (*yùyun* 御韻), which may be euphonies to “樹,” -*u* rhyme (*yùyun* 遇韻).  “襜, 蟾” -*em* (*yanyun*), which may be euphonies to “貪” -*om* (*tanyun*).  “子, 美, 水, 起, 芷, 指, 恥” -*ij* (*zhîyun*);  “飛, 薇, 輝, 歸” *-ij* (*weiyun*);  “欺, 芝” *-i* (*zhīyun*); which are probably all euphonies.  “英, 清” -*aeng* (*gengyun*);  “蓂, 醒, 霆, 經, 星” -*eng* (*qingyun*); which may be all euphonies. |

1 The Yellow Emperor collected copper ore from Mount Shou and cast bronze cauldrons at the feet of Mount Jing. *Shiji* 28.23a. Here it means very precious and sacred copper.

2 Zhongling water originated from the middle of the Yangtze River’s course near Zhenjiang. It was ranked number seven among the best water sources for brewing tea in Zhu Quan’s *Chapu*. See ZLCH, vol. 1: 176. Although Zhu Quan’s record of the Zhongling water dates to the Ming period, legends about the Zhongling water might circulated for a long time.

3*Chuci* 9.105-14. There is controversy regarding its authorship. Its author may be Qu Yuan or Song Yu.

4See Liu Ling’s *Jiude song*, *Quan Jin wen* 66.684. Liu described the status of a nobleman who was not bound by any mundane restrictions. Thunderclaps and Mount Tai were bound to be heard and seen by ordinary men. This nobleman could not hear the thunderclaps even when he was calm and not see the conspicuous profile of Mount Tai even when he was looking directly at it. Here it means Liu Ling could hear the thunderclaps because the tea woke him up.

5Lu Tong, described as the Immortal of Tea, was famous for his poem, *Writing to Thank Remonstrator Meng for Sending the New Tea* (*Zoubi xie Meng jianyi ji xincha*; hereafter “*Remonstrator Meng*” in QTS (1:388.970) (See the translation in James Benn 2015: 91–2). Lu describes that after drinking the first bowl of tea, one’s throat is moist and soothed; with the second bowl, boredom is relieved; the third bowl inspires the drinker with enough to compose five thousand chapters of literature; with the fourth bowl, the drinker begins to perspire, and any feelings of resentment are flushed away with the sweat; the fifth bowl cleanses the muscle and bones; the sixth bowl makes one immortal. Lu then warns people against drinking the seventh bowl because one would then feel the breeze under one’s armpits, which means that one would become an immortal ascending to the sky and leaving this world behind. Lu then indicates that he wants to ride on the wind and fly to Mount Penglai, where the immortals live.

6商山丈人 refers to the story of the four old men who showed their integrity by refusing to serve malevolent emperors (*Shiji* 55.8a-b).

7首陽先生 refers to the story of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, who refused to serve the Zhou government and survived by eating ferns on the remote Mount Shouyang (*Shiji* 61.3a).

8The beer in Chang’an is famous for being expensive. See the story of Ding Wei in *Xuezhai zhanbi* (2.32). Other Tang poets also decried the high price of beer in Chang’an, although the historical reliability of these claims is questionable.

9 The medicine market in Chengdu was famous and would be crowded at certain times of the year. See Lu You’s *Laoxuean biji* (6.225).

10A game of picking up flowers and plants played during the Duanwu Festival. *Jing Chu suishi ji* (11).

In this poem, Fan Zhongyan alludes to various historical figures, places, festivals, and, most importantly, tea-picking, tea-tipping, and tea contests. The different rhymes mark out various sections of this long antique-style poem. Lines 1 to 12, which use rhymes and euphonies, are about the location of the tea plantations and the picking and processing of raw tea. Lines 13 to 24 describe tea brewing contests, water, crushers, foam, fragrance, and the taste of tea. Lines 25 to the last line are about the functions and the value of tea, upon which one could rely to transcend the secular world. The tone and emotion of the poem are enlivening, and readers familiar with tea lore could easily understand the allusions.

Allusions in literary works were a common feature in a variety of periods. Since the tea-tipping and tea contests were Song period signature practices, their inclusion in poetry undoubtedly established the basic tones and trajectories of using tea allusions in the period’s literary works. Whether they are clearly revealed to the reader or appear obliquely as riddles, they are not simple word plays.[[31]](#footnote-34) Instead, such allusions were the scholar-artists’ sophisticated artistic strategies to elevate the status of the type of tea they chose. The tea that Fan chose to promote was, naturally, Jian’an tea, which was favoured in the *Daguan Treatise* and many other tea texts circulating in the Northern Song. Fan intended to associate Jian’an tea with famous historical figures and places in the reader’s mind.

Reclusiveness

Tea in the artistic world constructed by the scholar-artists was often associated with reclusive lifestyles, although, in reality, it was enjoyed by people of all mindsets. For the scholar-artists, however, striving for a reclusive lifestyle could be a source of contradiction. They aspired to be hermits, but few took concrete actions to become one. Su Shi was one of these scholar-artists. Ronald Egan translates the remarks of Li Zehou regarding Su Shi as follows – “Su never became a recluse, nor did he ever ‘return to the farm’, but the sense of the meaninglessness of worldly striving conveyed by his poetry and prose is deeper and more profound than that of any earlier writer.”[[32]](#footnote-35) We will not investigate whether Su’s literary works reflect more profound reclusive tendencies than others, but it is clear that the connection that he builds between the reclusive ideal and tea constitutes an important trend in literary works. Tea was constructed to be enjoyed by people with a dual identity – while physically part of the secular world, their spiritual aspiration lay in a private realm of leisurely contemplation.

Su Shi wrote this poem in 1072 when he was in office in Hangzhou:[[33]](#footnote-36)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **蘇軾《試院煎茶》[[34]](#footnote-37)** | **Su Shi, *Brewing Tea in the Exam Court*** |
| 蟹眼已過魚眼生 (-*aeng*)  | | | | — | — | [Bubbles in the shape of] fish eyes emerge after the appearance of crab’s eyes; |
| 颼颼欲作松風鳴 (-*aeng*)  | | | | — — — | The boiling water sounds like wind blowing over a pine forest. |
| 蒙茸出磨細珠落  — — | — | — | | [Tea leaves are] jammed into the grinder, tiny pearls fall out; |
| 眩轉遶甌飛雪輕 (-*aeng*)  | | | — — | — | [Foam] swirls dazzlingly in the bowl, as light as flying snow. | 4 |
| 銀瓶瀉湯誇第二 (*-ij*)  — — | — — | | | Boiled water poured out from a silver jar can be praised as the second best; |
| 未識古人煎水意 (-*ij*)  | | | — — | | | but [I] know nothing of the ancients’ way of heating water [with tea]. |
| 君不見昔時李生1好客手自煎 (-en)  — | | | — | — | | | | — | Did you not see how in the past Mr Li took it upon himself to brew tea out of hospitality? |
| 貴從活火發新泉 (-*en*)  | — | | | — — | He depended on the use of fresh spring water and a large fire. | 8 |
| 又不見今時潞公2煎茶學西蜀 (-o*wk*)  | | | — — | — — — | — | | Do you not see again how at the present time, the Duke of Lu learned from the West Sichuanese how to brew tea? |
| 定州花瓷琢紅玉 (-*owk*)  | — — — | — | | [He uses] the patterned Ding[zhou] wares decorated with red jade. |
| 我今貧病常苦飢 (-*i*)  | — — | — | — | I am now poor and sick and often suffer from hunger. |
| 分無玉碗捧蛾眉 (-*i*)  — — | | | — — | Not to me do the beautiful ladies offer [tea] in a jade bowl. | 12 |
| 且學公家作茗飲  | | — — | — | | Perhaps [I] should learn from the way officials drink tea: |
| 塼爐石銚行相隨 (-*i*)  — — | | — — — | [they] travel around equipped with brick braziers and stone-sprouted kettles. |
| 不用撐腸拄腹文字五千卷3  | | — — | | — | | — | | If only [I] needed not to exhaust [myself] from composing five thousand chapters of literary works. |
| 但願一甌常及睡足日高時 (-*i*)  | | | — — | | | | — — | [I] would wish that one bowl [of tea] would always be there [for me] and [I] could sleep deeply until late in the morning. | 16 |
|  | “生, 鳴, 輕” -*aeng* (*gengyun*).  “二, 意” *-ij* (*zhìyun*).  “煎, 泉” *-en* (*xianyun*).  “蜀, 玉” ­*-owk* (*woyun*).  “飢, 眉, 隨, 時” *-i* (*zhīyun*). |

1 Li Yue, an excellent Tang tea maker, maintained that tea should be roasted over a small fire but boiled in water over a large fire. See Wen Tingyun’s *Caicha lu*, ZLCH, vol. 1: 51.

2 潞公 refers to Wen Yanbo, who was conferred the title “the Duke of Lu.” SS 29:313.10260-1.

3 See Lu Tong’s poem, *Remonstrator Meng*.

Below is another poem by Su Shi composed in 1100 when he was about to move to Hunan from Hainan Island:[[35]](#footnote-38)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **蘇軾《汲江煎茶》[[36]](#footnote-39)** | **Su Shi, *Brewing Tea by Drawing Water from the River*** |
| 活水還須活火烹 (*-aeng*)  | | — — | | — | Boiling live water depends on live fire, |
| 自臨釣石取深清 (-*aeng*)  (|) — | | | — — | [I] have come to the fishing rock to draw water from the deep and clean [river]. |
| 大瓢貯月歸春甕  (|) — | | — — | | Water in the large ladle that holds the moon goes into the jar of spring; |
| 小杓分江入夜瓶 (-*eng*)  | | — — | | — | water in the small ladle that divides the river goes into the night bottle. | 4 |
| 雪乳已翻煎處腳  | | (|) — — | | | The snowy milk [tea foam] has covered the boiling feet [i.e. uncovered surface]. |
| 松風忽作瀉時聲 (-*aeng*)  — — | | | — — | [Water boiling and] spilling over suddenly makes the sound of wind blowing through the pine forest. |
| 枯腸未易禁三椀1  — — | | — — | | [I could drink] three bowls while my stomach is yet to be filled, |
| 坐聽荒城長短更 (*-aeng*)  | | — — (—) | — | sitting and listening to the [time-calling] clapper sounds in [this] deserted town. | 8 |
|  | “烹, 清, 聲, 更” *-aeng* (*gengyun*), which may be euphonies to “瓶” *-eng* (*qingyun*). |

1 See Lu Tong’s poem, *Remonstrator Meng*.

Neither poem was written in the heyday of Su Shi’s career. His time spent in Hangzhou was relatively comfortable, but his life in Hainan (1097–1100), the country's southernmost province, was unimaginable to northerners like Su. Nevertheless, Su has been praised throughout history for his resilient spirit, as seen in the two poems. In the *Brewing Tea in the Exam Court*, metaphors and analogies such as pearls and snow refer to the tea-tipping practice, the eyes of crabs and fish, and the wind in the pine forest to the water boiling. Su talks of “brewing tea” in the poem’s title, a Tang period practice. The historical reference alludes to Li Yue and the Duke of Lu (Wen Yanbo). Why is Wen mentioned in the poem? A Qing dynasty scholar Weng Fanggang provided some clues.[[37]](#footnote-40) Wen and Su opposed Wang Anshi’s reforms during Shenzong’s reign, among which were reforms to the exam system.[[38]](#footnote-41) Wang wanted to change the exam content from testing the candidates’ literary ability to their knowledge of contemporary political issues.[[39]](#footnote-42) In another poem *Invigilating the Exams and Submitting [This] to Exam Officers* (*Jianshi cheng zhu shiguan*), also written in 1072, Su criticises the exam reform more overtly, saying that he would rather sleep and forget about books.[[40]](#footnote-43) Weng’s analysis astutely points out the implications of the reference to sleeping in the last line.

The other poem, *Brewing Tea by Drawing Water from the River*, is an elegant and orderly poem highly acclaimed in Chinese literary history.[[41]](#footnote-44) The poem presents a sense of loss and solitude. Su had been banished to Hainan Island by this point and was experiencing the most difficult time in his life, yet complaints and recriminations are absent from the poem. Instead, Su constructs an image of himself as a calm recluse by situating himself in a tea drinking scene at night. The visual representations of the fire, fishing rock, water, moon, river, ladle, the darkness of the night, the snowy whiteness of the milk, and tea, go harmoniously with the representations of the sound of the wind from the pine forest (boiling water) and the time-calling clapper. The long-ending sound of the rhyme, *-aeng*, also presents an acoustically lingering effect that implies that Su still has things to say and stories to tell. Drinking tea at night has kept Su awake, and he would be awake for the long quiet night. Characteristically, Su Shi tends to be optimistic in the face of adversity. As the poem illustrates, his optimism takes the form of peace and serenity in the face of impending hardship.

Su Shi used tea to express his political viewpoints, reclusive inclinations, and signature optimistic spirit. In the realm of officialdom or withdrawal from the secular world, tea was not only an essential beverage to Su but also represented a particular set of cultural values and ideals. To scholar-artists like Su, these cultural values and ideals about tea were their own constructions but also had an impact on them in turn. Tea had been inextricably incorporated into their lives and linked to their identities.

Exchanges among the scholar-artists

The poems analysed in this section demonstrate how the communities of the scholar-artists were cemented through the exchange of tea and poems through which a sort of private language was created and shared among themselves. The poems indicate the exchange process and tell us how the recipients responded to the gifts of poems and tea. The givers’ values and perceptions about tea and life were confirmed, reiterated, consolidated, elaborated, and further interpreted and re-imagined in the recipients’ responses.

Huang Tingjian wrote the first of the three poems discussed below to accompany a gift of tea that he sent to his mentor Su Shi. As far as can be ascertained, the poem was written before the eighth day of the second month of the Chinese lunar calendar in 1087:[[42]](#footnote-45)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **黃庭堅《雙井茶送子瞻》[[43]](#footnote-46)** | **Huang Tingjian, *Presenting the Shuangjing* *Tea to Zizhan (Su Shi)*** |
| 人間風日不到處 (-*o*)  — — — | | | | | [At the place where] the wind and the sun of the mortal world cannot reach, |
| 天上玉堂1森寶書 (-*o*)  — | | — — | — | where the sacred books from the jade chamber of the immortal world lie around in splendid disarray, |
| 想見東坡舊居士  | | — — | — | | [I] envisioned the old Householder of the East Slope [i.e. Su Shi] |
| 揮毫百斛瀉明珠 (-*u*)  — — | | | — — | waving the brush with hundred litres of ink and pouring out bright pearls [of beautiful calligraphic works]. | 4 |
| 我家江南摘雲腴2 (-*u*)  | — — — | — — | The “Sleek cloud” [tea] was harvested in my garden south of the river. |
| 落磑霏霏雪不如 (-*o*)  | | — — | | — | The snow there is not as white as the tea powder fallen from the stone mortar. |
| 為君喚起黃州3夢  | — | | — — | | [May the tea] invoke your dream of Huangzhou. |
| 獨載扁舟向五湖4 (-*u*)  | | — — | | — | Sailing the boat, all alone, to the Five Lakes. | 8 |
|  | “書, 如” *-o* (*yúyun* 魚韻);  “珠, 腴, 湖” *-u* (*yúyun* 虞韻);[[44]](#footnote-47)  “處” *-o* (*yùyun* 御韻); which may be all euphonies. |

1 玉堂 refers to the jade chamber of the immortals and is an alias of the Northern Song Hanlin Academy on the other. Su Shi worked at the Hanlin Academy, drafting royal decrees and important policies.

2 雲腴 literally means the sleekness of the cloud. Here it might refer to a type of tea or describe that the tea is as white as the clouds.

3 Su Shi was banished to Huangzhou from 1080 to 1084, but that was also a period where Su’s literary production reached its height.

4

Su Shi sent his reply on the eighth day of the second month:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **蘇軾《黃魯直以詩饋雙井茶次韻為謝》[[45]](#footnote-48)** | **Su Shi, *In Appreciation of the Gifts of the Poem and the Shuangjing Tea from Huang Luzhi (Tingjian), I Replied in the Same Rhyme*** |
| 江夏1無雙種奇茗  — | — — | — — | Unique tea bushes are planted in Jiangxia. |
| 汝陰2六一3誇新書 (-*o*)  | — | | — — — | The six-ones (Householder) of Ruyin praised [them] in his new book. |
| 磨成不敢付僮僕  | — | | | — | | [I] do not dare give the ground [tea powder] to my servant |
| 自看雪湯生璣珠 (-*u*)  | | | — — — — | but [I take it upon myself to] watch the boiled water, as white as snow, with bubbles rising like pearls. | 4 |
| 列仙4之儒瘠不腴 (-*u*)  | — — — | | — | The Confucian scholar, among the immortals, is not plump, but thin and weak; |
| 只有病渴同相如5 (-*o*)  | | | | — — — | Only my illness of thirst is the same as that of [Sima] Xiangru. |
| 明年我欲東南去  — — | | — — | | Next year, I desire to go to the southeast. |
| 畫舫何妨宿太湖 (-*u*)  | — — — | | — | What does it matter having to spend nights on a painted boat in the Lake of Tai? | 8 |
|  | “書, 如” *-o* (*yúyun* 魚韻); which may be euphonies to  “珠, 腴, 湖” *-u* (*yúyun* 虞韻). |

1 A place in today’s Hubei. Here, it generally refers to an area in the south. Huang Tingjian’s *Shuangjing* tea was actually from Nanchang in Jiangxi, far from Hubei Jiangxia.

2 A county belonging to Yingzhou, covering areas in today’s Fuyang of Anhui and Xincai of Henan.

3 The Six-ones Householder (*Liuyi Jushi*), an alias of Ouyang Xiu. He was the Governor of the commandery (*zhizhou*) of Yingzhou and spent his retired life in Ruyin (a part of Yingzhou).

4 Sima Xiangru mentioned the immortals in his *Rhapsody of the Great Man* (*Daren fu*). See *Hanshu* 57(*xia*).8b.

5 Sima Xiangru has an illness of feeling thirsty constantly. *Hanshu* 57(*xia*).6b. This illness, similar to but not the same as diabetes, makes one weak, thin, thirsty, and hungry constantly.

Upon receiving Su’s reply, Huang thanked Su with another poem, which elicited yet another reply from Su. These latter poems, not quoted here, are mainly about Huang’s eye problems.[[46]](#footnote-49) Afterward, Huang replied with two more poems. The one included below is about tea:[[47]](#footnote-50)

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| --- | --- |
| **黃庭堅《省中烹茶懷子瞻用前韵》[[48]](#footnote-51)** | **Huang Tingjian, *Missing Zizhan while Brewing Tea in the Officers’ Quarters, Using the Previous Rhyme Set*** |
| 閤門1井不落第二  | — | | | | | | The well at the central government office ranks second to none [in water quality]. |
| 竟陵2谷簾3定誤書 (-*o*)  | — | — | | — | Lu Yu’s [high praises of] Gulian Creek must have been a mistake. |
| 思公煮茗共湯鼎  — — | — | — | | [I] think of you, and [I] brew tea with the boiled water and the cauldron. |
| 蚯蚓竅生魚眼珠4 (-*u*)  — | | — — | — | The [water bubbles are like] fish eyes, [as if] coming out of holes dug by the earthworms. | 4 |
| 置身九州之上腴 (-*u*)  | — | — — | — | In the most fertile land of the Nine States, |
| 爭名燄中沃焚如5 (-*o*)  — — | — | — — | The fire of desire for fame was quenched. |
| 但恐次山6胸壘塊7  | | | — — | | | [I am] afraid that the lumps of earth inside Cishan’s chest [which causes me anxiety] |
| 終便酒舫石魚湖8 (-*u*)  — | | — | — — | will eventually [put to rest only by drinking on] the beer boats on the Stone Fish Lake. | 8 |
|  | Same as the previous poem. |

1 One of the offices of the central government in charge of rituals, banqueting, and courtly orders (*Mengliang lu* 9.76). As a high government official, Su Shi seemed to have an office where a well could provide water of the best quality for making tea.

2 Lu Yu originated from Hubei Jingling.

3 Shuilian Creek in the Kangwang Valley in the Mount Lu area. In Zhang Youxin’s *Jiancha shuiji*, Lu Yu ranked the Shuilian Creek the best water (ZLCH, vol. 1: 35).

4 These were standard terms in the Song period referring to the form of bubbles in the water at different temperatures.

5 焚如, fire (*Zhouyi* 3.20).

6 次山 is an alias of Yuan Jie, a Tang poet and politician who helped subdue the An-Shi rebellions.

7 壘塊 literally means lumps of earth (*Shishuo xinyu* 5.178). Here it refers to the story of Ruan Ji, who described his anxiety as lumps of earth inside his chest that needed to be put to rest by beer.

8 酒舫石魚湖 refer to the beer boats on the Stone Fish Lake. This phrase originates from Yuan Jie’s *Song on the Stone Fish Lake* (*Shiyuhu Shang quite*) (QTS 1:242.611). Yuan describes that the big waves on the lake could not stop the boats from transporting beer. He was drinking to relieve anxiety. In Huang Tingjian’s case, he is afraid that the tea was not powerful enough to help him relieve his anxiety, and he might need to resort to beer.

The scholar-artists’ mutual exchanges not only set the fundamental poetic tone used in their circles but also determined how their disciples perceived tea. While Ouyang Xiu was Su Shi’s mentor, Su also nurtured a group of disciples. Huang was prominent among them. Huang officially became Su’s disciple in the first month of the year 1086. In that year, two of Su’s most notorious political rivals, Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, died in the fourth and ninth months.[[49]](#footnote-52) Su was a Hanlin academician and was in charge of making recommendations for people to serve in the capital. Several of his disciples, including Huang, were appointed to the Palace Library in the tenth month of that year to compile the *Veritable Records of Shenzong’s Reign* (*Shenzong shilu*).[[50]](#footnote-53) That was the pinnacle of their political careers, and they maintained a close relationship. Since Su occupied a higher government position and was nine years senior to Huang, the forty-one-year-old Huang wrote the first poem with a rather flattering tone. It appears to be the case that Huang possessed a large store of *Shuangjing* tea from his hometown, as he frequently sent tea as gifts to colleagues along with his poems. For a lower-ranking official, this was a traditional and common way of attracting the attention of superiors. Politeness and deference characterise the tone of the poem. At the same time, Huang also attempted to evoke Su Shi’s thoughts of reclusiveness since Su’s life in Huangzhou and the literary works he created there were so famous that Huang used them as a reference in the first poem. Su’s reply echoed Huang. Eventually, Huang reiterates the aspiration of reclusiveness in the final poem by alluding to Yuan Jie and Ruan Ji, who drank beer to relieve anxiety, whereas Su and Huang drank tea instead.

Through their several rounds of exchanges of poems, they came to a consensus about the artistic associations of tea. To the merchants, tea could help them make a profit; to the labourers, tea was a soothing beverage, but to this group of scholar-artists (Su and Huang), tea could help quench the fire of desire, relieve anxiety and depression, and evoke solitary contemplation. They inherited these values from their mentors. In this case, Su inherited them from Ouyang and shared them with his disciple, Huang. Moreover, together, they opposed the drinking of beer in this context. If they drank it at all, they would do so only as a last resort. To the different generations of scholar-artists, tea became the beverage *par excellence* to stay calm and peaceful and to promote artistic endeavours.

The sound elements of the poems in the exchange of letters are fascinating.[[51]](#footnote-55) In terms of the musicality of the three poems, they might appear to be regulated poems on the surface. They are all ancient-style poems. The first line of Huang’s first poem, which uses three consecutive level-toned characters and then four consecutive oblique-toned characters, would have been unacceptable in any regulated poem.[[52]](#footnote-56) However, the categories of the rhymes Huang uses in the first poem are phonetically similar (*yúyun* 魚韻 and *yúyun* 虞韻), although they do not belong to the same group.[[53]](#footnote-57) These similar rhymes create a euphonic effect. The two groups of rhyming characters that Huang uses constitute an ABBAB rhyming pattern, which Su follows and is then repeated by Huang again. The poems present a unique melody when they are read aloud in sequence. Compared to poems exchanged between other scholars, such as the ones by Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen,[[54]](#footnote-58) where the same rhyme runs throughout, Huang and Su’s poems are distinctive – peculiar even. More interestingly, the poets could have composed the poem using regular schemes, but Huang and Su intentionally avoided doing so. The reason may be simply that Huang originally chose not to write aregulated poem; Su followed suit, and the two men kept this tacit understanding in place as they proceeded with their epistolary exchange. Compared to Cai Jing’s careful melodic resonation of the rhyme and tonal pattern of Huizong’s poem in the *Literati Gathering*, Huang and Su demonstrated the opposite extreme.

Huang’s initial gift of tea and poems resulted in several rounds of correspondence between him and his influential mentor. Huang’s tactic of demonstrating his friendship with Su and his literary ability was successful because he caught Su’s attention and caused him to invest time and energy to reply with the same peculiar and distinctive rhyming and euphonic pattern. This was not simple wordplay or jest[[55]](#footnote-59) but was intended as a way of forming a private poetic language. This private language would not remain a secret forever. Eventually, it would be revealed to later generations, who would imitate it as a literary model. The scholar-artists reaffirmed their subscription to the values and attitudes inherited from their mentors by imitating their literary styles. Tea, and the rituals and cultures surrounding it, was one vehicle by which these values and attitudes were passed down.

**Aromatic substances in literary works**

Unlike tea, aromatic substances are comparatively rarely alluded to, and when they are, they lack historical depth. The *xiangpu* and the practice of burning aromatic substances were widely disseminated in Northern Song. At about the same time, the scholar-artists’ exchanges of aromatic substances and related literary works started to gain currency. Since the fragrance of burning aromatic substances would easily diffuse into the air, the scholar-artists and their peers needed to sit in relative proximity to the incense burner to enjoy the fragrance. The intimacy of the setting and the shared olfactory experience further consolidated their feelings of closeness and a sense of belonging to the groups. In addition to enjoying the fragrances together at gatherings, they would also send their favourite aromatic substances to their friends to enjoy at their leisure. Huang Tingjian was one of the most famous scholar-artists who cherished aromatic substances. He initiated another round of correspondence with Su Shi on the subject of fragrances. These correspondences occurred in 1086 when Huang became Su’s disciple, and they established a close relationship. Huang first sent two poems to Su:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 黃庭堅《有惠江南帳中香者戲贈二首》[[56]](#footnote-60) | **Poem set Huang 1**  **Huang Tingjian, *Presenting in Jest Two Poems with A Gift of the Canopy Scent from the South of the River*** |
| 百鍊香螺沉水1  | | — — — | | Incense [made of] whelk and aloeswood after a hundred stages of refinement. |
| 寶薰近出江南 (-*om*)  | — | | — — | A precious incense burner recently from the south of the river. |
| 一穟黃雲繞几  | | — — | — | A filament of yellow fume coils up from the table. |
| 深禪想對同參 (-*om*)  — — | | — — | [I] envision [we] practice deep mediation together. | 4 |
| 1st poem | “南, 參” *-om* (*tanyun*). |
|  | |
| 螺甲割昆侖耳2  — | | — — | | Black ear-shaped [raw scent material] from cutting out the *opercula* of whelks. |
| 香材屑鷓鴣斑3 (-*aen*)  — — | | — — | Crumbs of scent timbers, spots of francolin’s feathers. |
| 欲雨鳴鳩日永  | | — — | | | The rain is about to come; singing doves; long unending day. |
| 下帷睡鴨4春閑 (-*aen*)  | — | | — — | Curtain falls; sleeping ducks; spring of leisure. | 4 |
| 2nd poem | “斑, 閑” *-aen* (*shanyun*). |

1 螺 refers to whelk or turban snail (*turbinidae*). 沉水, literally “sinking into the water”, refers to aloeswood here. *Xiangpu* 1.13. *Cf*. West 2017: 308, note 78. “The *operculum* of a whelk was mixed with ‘lignum aloes, musk and various medicinal flowers’. See Bernard Read, *Chinese Materia Medica: Turtle and Shellfish Drugs: Avian Drugs: A Compendium of Minerals and Stones Used in Chinese Medicine from the Pen-ts’ao kang-mu*, vol. 3, *Chinese medicine series* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1977), 74–75.” See also West 2017: 138. For a picture of the turban snail and its operculum, see ZLBC 22.545-6. Yang Zhishui 2014: 54.

2 螺甲 means the *operculum* of a whelk; 昆侖耳 refers to the black, ear-shaped *operculum*. It is a raw material for making aromatic substances. See Yang Zhishui 2014: 54-5.

3 鷓鴣斑, literally, the spotted patterns [of the feathers of a] francolin, here it refers to a type of aromatic substance from Hainan. See Yang Zhishui 2014: 54-5.

4 睡鴨 could mean a literal sleeping duck or an incense burner in the shape of a sleeping duck.

Then Su replied with two poems with matching rhymes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 蘇軾《和黃魯直燒香二首》[[57]](#footnote-64) | **Poem set Su 1**  **Su Shi, *Two Poems Resonating with Huang Luzhi on Burning Incense*** |
| 四句燒香偈子  | | — — | | | Four lines of *gathas* about burning incense |
| 隨香遍滿東南 (-*om*)  — — | | — — | got carried by the scent to spread all over the Southeast. |
| 不是聞思所及  | | — — | | | [The incense is] not within reach of hearing and thoughts; |
| 且令鼻觀先參 (-*om*)  | | | — — — | [but for the moment,] allow [my faculties of] olfaction and vision to meditate first. | 4 |
| 1st poem | |
|  | |
| 萬卷明窗小字  | | — — | | | Tiny characters in tens of thousands of books by the window |
| 眼花只有斕斑 (-*aen*)  | — | | — — | dazzle the eyes with bright colours. |
| 一炷煙消火冷  | | — — | | | A stick [of burning incense]; fume extinguishes; heat cools; |
| 半生身老心閑 (-*aen*)  | — — | — — | Half of life; body ages; mind unoccupied. | 4 |
| 2nd poem | Rhymes scheme matched the previous poems. |

Two more poems followed by Huang about the canopy scent (poem set Huang 2) and two others by Su about drinking beer and paintings (poem set Su 2).[[58]](#footnote-65) Eventually, Huang replied with these two:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 黃庭堅《子瞻繼和復答二首》[[59]](#footnote-66) | **Poem set Huang 3**  **Huang Tingjian, *Two Poems in Reply to Zizhan’s Replies*** |
| 置酒未容虛左  | | | — — | | It would not do to have any guests when beer is served. |
| 論詩時要指南 (-*om*)  | — — | | — | A guide is needed when poetry is discussed. |
| 迎笑天香滿袖  | | — — | | | Smiling, [I] welcome with heavenly scent filling up [my] sleeves |
| 喜公新赴朝參 (-*om*)  | — — | — — | [and I am] glad that you have newly assumed courtly rituals [i.e. back in power]. | 4 |
| 1st poem | |
|  | |
| 迎燕溫風旎旎  — | — — | | | Wind warm and gentle, welcoming swallows; |
| 潤花小雨斑斑 (-*aen*)  | — | | — — | little drops of rain moistening flowers. |
| 一炷煙中得意  | | — — | | | Enveloped in the fumes from a stick of incense and feeling pleased, |
| 九衢塵裏偷閑 (-*aen*)  | — — | — — | [I] snatch a moment of leisure from a life among the dust of Nine Avenues. | 4 |
| 2nd poem | Same as the previous poems. |

Although we have little direct evidence that Su loved aromatic substances, these poems cast him as a scholar-artist who enjoyed aromatic substances as much as any other. Regardless of his personal like or dislike of the then popular aromatic substances, his scholar-artist peers, including his disciple, would assume that he appreciated them. Through their literary construction, Su’s image as a fragrance-lover was established and reaffirmed in the dissemination of the poems. Huang also associated the practice of burning aromatic substances with Buddhists, as the monks preferred meditating in a fragrance-filled setting. As for themselves, Su and Huang also appreciated Buddhist philosophy and had many Buddhist friends. Meditation, a symbolic act of removing oneself from worldly matters, was a topic of conversation they shared with the Buddhists. Like tea, aromatic substances were vehicles of the scholar-artists’ values and perceptions.

The poems are antique-style poems with four lines and six characters per line. The same is true of those that are not shown here. Huang and Su strictly followed the rhymes set in the initial poem. The tonal patterns of the poems are very interesting. Since each line has six characters, the tones of the even-numbered characters were critical, while the restrictions for the odd-numbered ones could be looser, the tones of all the even-numbered characters of each line are listed in the following table:

Table 4. Tonal patterns of the even-numbered characters of the five poem sets.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Poem set | Huang 1 | Su 1 | Huang 2 | Su 2 | Huang 3 |
| 1st poem | 鍊 螺 水  | — | | 句 香 子  | — | | 上 人 臭  | — | | 酒 逢 沐  | — | | 酒 容 左  | — | |
|  | 薰 出 南  — | — | 香 滿 南  — | — | 生 孔 南  — | — | 同 北 南  — | — | 詩 要 南  — | — |
|  | 穟 雲 几  | — — | 是 思 及  | — | | 印 嚴 寂  | — | | 復 呼 和  | — | | 笑 香 袖  | — | |
|  | 禪 對 參  — | — | 令 觀 參  | — — | 必 林 參  | — — | 牆 是 參  — | — | 公 赴 參  — | — |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2nd poem | 甲 昆 耳  | — | | 卷 窗 字  | — | | 讀 宗 傳  | — | | 青 是 世  — | | | 燕 風 旎  | — | |
|  | 材 鷓 斑  — | — | 花 有 斑  — | — | 章 減 班  — | — | 石 窺 斑  | — — | 花 雨 斑  — | — |
|  | 雨 鳩 永  | — | | 炷 消 冷  | — | | 以 為 俗  | — | | 字 還 節  | — | | 炷 中 意  | — | |
|  | 帷 鴨 閑  — | — | 生 老 閑  — | — | 知 要 閑  — | — | 行 似 閑  — | — | 衢 裏 閑  — | — |

We can easily see that the tonal pattern of the Su 1 poem set mostly follows that of Huang 1, except for slight variations in the last two lines of the first poem of Su 1. Huang 2 strictly follows the tonal pattern of Su 1; there is not a single character with a tone out of sync. Since Huang 2 is replying to Su, Huang dedicated all of his efforts to resonate with the content and tonal pattern of Su 1. As Huang had just become a disciple of Su, he needed to demonstrate his literary abilities. Su 2 follows some, but not all, the tonal patterns of Huang 2 (with slight variations in the last line of the first poem and the first two lines of the second poem). Huang 3 again spares no effort in following Su 2 and Su 1.[[60]](#footnote-67) These tonal matchings were not a simple matter.[[61]](#footnote-69) Matching tone, rhyme and diction is a challenge in Chinese poetry. The diction has to be precise, and there should be no repetition. A word can fit the content but not the tone. Even if individual words fit both the content and the tone, they may not fit when they are put together into a phrase. When all these are taken care of, there is still the matter of rhyme. It is clear that, although some of the poems were entitled in “jest” (*xizuo*), Huang and Su took their crafting very seriously.[[62]](#footnote-70)

Huang used these poems to strengthen his friendship with Su. This explains why he frequently sent tea, aromatic substances, and poems to Su. By demonstrating his literary abilities and creating opportunities to share sensory experiences with Su, he hoped to impress his mentor. Su, as a mentor and official superior to Huang, paid attention to his scholastic image. He portrayed an image of someone who would prefer to remain aloof from politics and secular affairs, even though he never managed to achieve this ambition. He described himself as fond of drinking tea, enjoying fine fragrances, meditating, and doing simple tasks usually performed by servants (drawing water from the river and grinding tea). Su also approved of Huang’s artistic portrayal of himself. In matching Huang’s themes, rhymes/euphonies, and tonal patterns in his riposte poems to Huang, he projected a shared vision of life.

It matters little whether Su was actually a great lover of tea or aromatic substances as long as he maintained the appearance of appreciating them in his literary works, as was customary for scholar-artists in his time.[[63]](#footnote-71) In 1086, the poems were a private matter between Su and Huang. However, following their publication alongside other literary works, the impression of how a scholar-artist behaved was publicly affirmed. The poetic epistolary exchange between Su and Huang would be read and imitated by their disciples and by generations of scholar-artists, and they would become models of a collective imagination of how scholar-artists should conduct their lives and the nature of their concerns. Su and Huang’s preoccupation with tea and aromatic substances in their poetry would contribute to cementing these cultural practices as inextricably linked to the identity of scholar-artists in the Northern Song.

***Qin* in literary works**

Not everybody could play the *qin*, but scholar-artists liked to be portrayed, at least, as connoisseurs of *qin* music. This section concerns literary works about playing the *qin* and appreciating its music. Whether written as a form of self-expression or a poetic exchange, these works demonstrate how the *qin* contributed to constructing the image of the scholar-artists.

No other body of literary works related to *qin* music attracted the participation of so many scholar-artists as the tradition that developed out of Ouyang Xiu’s famous essay, *Note of the Pavilion of the Drunken Old Man* (*Zuiwengting ji*; hereafter “*Note of the Pavilion*”), and his friendship with a *qin* player seven years his junior, Shen Zun.[[64]](#footnote-72) By contributing their songs and poems about *qin* music and scenes of *qin* playing to this body of literary works, the participating scholars attempted to demonstrate their sophisticated understandings of *qin* music, even though they came from different generations and did not have any direct relationship with Ouyang Xiu and Shen Zun. The works they exchanged, shared, and then made public concerning the *qin* music built up a common understanding of the *qin* even though they did not necessarily have a chance to meet.

Table 5. List of literary works and musical pieces inspired by Ouyang Xiu’s *Note of the Pavilion*.[[65]](#footnote-73) The underlined works are translated below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Genre | Author | Date |
| *Note of the Pavilion*[[66]](#footnote-74) | Essay | Ouyang Xiu | 1046 |
| *Chant of the Drunken Old Man* (*Zuiweng yín*) | *Qin* song, three movements, no lyrics | Shen Zun | 1046–1055 |
| *Chant of the Drunken Old Man, with Preamble*[[67]](#footnote-75) | *Chu* song (*Chuci*)style | Ouyang Xiu | 1056 |
| *Chant of the Drunken Old Man*[[68]](#footnote-76) | *Chuci* style | Mei Yaochen | 1056 |
| *To Shen Zun, with Preamble*[[69]](#footnote-77) | Song lyrics | Ouyang Xiu | 1057 |
| *A Song for Professor Shen*[[70]](#footnote-78) | Song lyrics | Ouyang Xiu | 1057 |
| *To Professor Shen, the Deputy Magistrate of Jianzhou*[[71]](#footnote-79) | Song lyrics | Mei Yaochen | 1057 |
| *Presented to Professor Shen, with Yongshu* (Ouyang Xiu) | Song lyrics | Liu Chang | 1057 |
| *Imitating* *Chant of the Drunken Old Man* | *Chuci* style | Wang Ling | 1057–1059 |
| *Preface to Chant of the Drunken Old Man*[[72]](#footnote-80) | Essay | Ouyang Xiu | 1070 |
| *To the Tune “Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man,” with Preamble*[[73]](#footnote-81) | *Qin* (*diaozi*)song lyrics | Su Shi | 1082 |
| *Written after* *To the Tune “Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man”*[[74]](#footnote-82) | Essay | Su Shi | 1092 |
| *To the Tune of “Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man*” | Song lyrics | Guo Xiangzheng | 1092 |
| *Preface to a poem[[75]](#footnote-83)* | Essay | Huang Tingjian | 1101 |
| *To the Tune of“Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man*”[[76]](#footnote-84) | Song lyrics | Xin Qiji | *Ca*. 1189 |
| *To the Tune of “Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man*” | Song lyrics | Lou Yao | 12th–13th century |

Ouyang Xiu wrote the famous *Note of the Pavilion* during his time of banishment in Chuzhou in today’s Anhui. This was a low point in Ouyang’s life, but a scholar-official, Shen Zun, who admired Ouyang so much that he visited Ouyang in Chuzhou, composed three movements of a *qin* melody which he entitled *Chant of the Drunken Old Man*. After Ouyang left Chuzhou and regained his authority and power in 1055, Ouyang served as an emissary to the Khitan, and in 1056 Ouyang wrote a song in the *Chuci* style recalling the story behind *qin* music and Shen’s friendship, which was already ten years old by then. The rhymes of Ouyang Xiu’s song were well-organised, and Ouyang probably intended to use the euphonies to construct a consistent melodic pattern. In the same year, Ouyang’s close friend Mei Yaochen also composed a song recalling Ouyang’s life in Chuzhou and Ouyang’s friendship with Shen Zun.[[77]](#footnote-85) The structures of the rhymes and euphonies of Ouyang’s poems and songs cited in the table above are all well-organised, but none of them could fit into Shen’s *qin* melody.[[78]](#footnote-86) The frequent changes in the rhymes in Mei’s lyrics reflect how difficult it is to compose rhymed lyrics that could fit into the melody and express the lyricist’s emotions.

In 1057, Shen was appointed the Deputy Magistrate of Jianzhou (*Jianzhou tongpan*), and Ouyang, Mei, and Liu Chang bade farewell to him. At his farewell party, Shen played the *Chant of the Drunken Old Man* again, and the three scholar-artists composed poems and songs for Shen. Ouyang and Mei were aging, and they all treasured the memory of the *qin*-gathering with Shen. In 1070, ten years after Mei passed away, Ouyang recalled the farewell party and wrote the *Preface to* *Chant of the Drunken Old Man*, describing the sequence of his songs concerning Shen’s *qin* melody.

By 1082, Ouyang Xiu and Shen Zun had all passed away, and Su Shi composed the lyrics for the melody, which Cui Xian, a Daoist from Mount Lu, notated, using the then popular abbreviated-character notation (*jianzipu*).[[79]](#footnote-87) In the preamble, Su Shi recalled Ouyang and Shen’s friendship built on their joint interest in the *qin* connections and noted that Ouyang’s song lyrics did not fit the *qin* melody. Su also criticised others for trying to bend their lyrics to fit into Shen’s *qin* melody. As a result, Su composed his new lyrics:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **蘇軾《醉翁操‧並引》**[[80]](#footnote-88) | **Su Shi, *To the Tune “Qin Music for the Drunken Old Man,” with Preamble*** |
| 琅然1 (-*en*)  — — | Imposingly, |
| 清圓 (-*en*)  — — | distinctively, perfectly, |
| 誰彈 (-*an*)  — — | who plays? |
| 響空山 (-*ean*)  | — — | Resonating in the empty mountains? | 4 |
| 無言 (-*on*)  — — | Speechlessly, |
| 惟翁醉中知其天 (-*en*)  — — | — — — — | only the Old Man knows heaven while inebriated. |
| 月明風露娟娟 (-*en*)  | — — | — — | The moon is bright, the wind and the dew mild and soft. |
| 人未眠 (-*en*)  — | — | Sleepless, | 8 |
| 荷簣2過山前 (-*en*)  | | | — — | carrying a bamboo basket [as he] passed by the hill; |
| 曰有心也哉此賢 (-*en*)  | | — | — | — | [the basket carrier] said: considerate is this wise man! |
| 〈第二叠泛聲同此〉 | (The harmonics of the second movement are the same) |
| 醉翁嘯咏 (-*aeng*)  | — | | | The Drunken Old Man whistled and chanted, | 12 |
| 聲和流泉 (-*en*)  — | — — | the sound echoing with the running creek. |
| 醉翁去後  | — | | | After the Drunken Old Man departed, |
| 空有朝吟夜怨 (-*on*)  — | — — | | | only the laments remain, days and nights. |
| 山有時而童巔 (-*en*)  — | — — — — | Occasionally, the mountains are barren; | 16 |
| 水有時而回淵 (-*en*)  | | — — — — | occasionally, the water returns. |
| 思翁無歲年 (-*en*)  — — — | — | The Old Man is remembered from year to year. |
| 翁今為飛仙 (-*en*)  — — — — — | Now the Old Man must have become immortal, |
| 此意在人間 (-*ean*)  | | | — — | leaving this affection in the mundane world. | 20 |
| 試聽徽外兩三弦 (-*en*)  | | — | | — — | Try to listen to the stringed [instruments] beyond these *hui*-markers. |
|  | “然, 圓, 天, 娟, 眠, 前, 賢, 泉, 巔, 淵, 年, 仙, 弦” *-en* (*xianyun*);  “彈” *-an* (*hanyun*);  “山, 間” *-ean* (*shanyun*);  “言” *-on* (*yúanyun*);  “咏” *-aeng* (*jingyun*);  “怨” *-on* (*yùanyun*); are probably all euphonies. |

1 See Ouyang Xiu’s *Guitian lu* 2.24.

2 It refers to a story of Confucius recorded in the *Analects* 7.67. The basket carrier described Confucius as a considerate and persevering man.

The story of Ouyang and Shen’s friendship and Shen’s *qin* melody was probably widely circulated before 1082. As Ouyang and his essay *Note of the Pavilion* became more famous, so to did Shen’s *Chant of the Drunken Old Man*. This explains why Cui Xian could play Shen’s melody and notated the melody. As Su Shi noted, there had been numerous attempts to compose suitable lyrics for the famous *Chant of the Drunken Old Man* melody as these scholar-artists would want their names to be attached to the prestigious *qin* community centred on Ouyang.

The story, with its exciting plot and rich allusions, painted scholar-artists in a positive light. The story traces Ouyang’s banishment and the way he subsequently regained his office, authority, and power. Shen features prominently in the story. He is portrayed as being kind to a desperate stranger and having the good fortune to befriend such a prominent figure, famed for his literary skill and moral rectitude. The story recounts how their friendship was built on mutual respect for one another’s literary ability and esteem for each other’s mastery of their respective arts (Ouyang’s literary and Shen’s musical abilities). Many scholar-officials have experienced political setbacks and banishment in Chinese history, and Ouyang’s exile in Chuzhou must have been a source of comfort for them over the centuries. They would also desire to have at least a friend who truly understands and appreciates their scholarly-artistic abilities. In this light, Shen and Mei are exemplary figures.

Ouyang, Mei, and Shen’s friendship was also an outstanding model of companionship based on shared artistic pursuits for scholar-artists to emulate. The story’s strength relies on the relationship having begun at the low point of the scholar-artist’s career, meaning the friendship was unsullied by ambiguous agendas or sycophancy. Shen’s first acquaintance with Ouyang in Chuzhou is one of the best examples of friendship in Chinese literature. At the centre of this relationship was Shen’s *qin* music. Understandably, literary works that describe or are related to Shen’s melody became very popular among the scholar-artists.

Su Shi was one of the best lyricists among the group of scholar-artists who wanted to be associated with the community of Ouyang, Shen, and Mei. He devoted tremendous efforts to producing these lyrics. The emotions and narratives conveyed in the lyrics accord with those of Ouyang and Mei. The leading rhyme group Su uses is the *-en*, which connects most lines of the lyrics. The other ending characters are not randomly chosen but are probably all euphonies to the leading rhyme group. The format of Su’s lyrics could well be an exemplary *diaozi* by the reckoning of the *qin* textbook by Zequan and others.[[81]](#footnote-89) The first line, “*langran*,” generated two slow sounds, followed by the sounds from line two to the first character of line five, “*qingyuan*, *shuitan*, *xiang kongshan*, *wu*,” then the player took a breath, and continued with the remaining character and line six “*yan*, *wei Weng*.” Notably, most of the sounds are level tones. The lyrics that could accord with the *qin* melody and be cited by Zequan and others’ *qin* textbook, Su’s version could be sung well while the *qin* was played. It was strange that Ouyang was claimed to be an excellent *qin* player, but no *qin* players adopted his songs and poems. This might reflect that composing lyrics for the *qin* melody (*diaozi* in this case) requires a set of techniques significantly different from playing the *qin*. Being an excellent piano player does not mean one can write good lyrics for piano music. Although we do not know how well Su played the *qin*, he truly knew *qin* music and how to compose suitable lyrics. *Qin* lyricists faced complicated problems that writers of poems, songs, and *ci* did not have to manage. The *ci* writers needed to attend to the content, tonal patterns, rhymes, and length of lines of each tune. On top of these, the *diaozi* lyricist needed to make his lyrics accord with the *qin* melody too.[[82]](#footnote-90)

Su’s lyrics were subsequently judged to accord with the *qin* melody in Huang Tingjian’s preface to one of his poems.[[83]](#footnote-91) Huang explained that this was why the people in Sichuan were fortunate enough to listen to Shen’smelody and Su’s lyrics. The lyrics composition trend lasted until the end of the twelfth century. Even Xin Qiji, a famous scholar-artist and general of the Southern Song, composed lyrics related to the lore about Ouyang and Shen, using Shen’s melody. For the reasons explained above, it is not surprising to see so many prominent scholar-artists related to the trend.

1. Wang Cheng-hua 1998; Yi Ruofen 2006; 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
2. Wang Cheng-hua 1998. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. Notes on Cai Jing’s poem in Chapter 1. See also *Jiu Tangshu* 72.11a. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
4. See the discussion in Chapter 1, and see also Cao Zhi’s preface in ZQHS, 18; *Cheng Yujian qinlun*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
5. The character *yín* also appears in Huizong’s colophon poem on the *Literati Gathering*, where it appears together with the character *zhuo*, which refers to a finger technique of plucking the *qin* string. In this context, the *yín* character is a gerund. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. ZQHS, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
7. *Cheng Yujian qinlun*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
8. ZQHS, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. *Qinshi* 6.45-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. ZQHS, 18. *Cheng Yujian qinlun*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
11. Wang Li 1979: 63-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
12. For the Middle Chinese reconstruction, see Baxter and Sagart 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
13. ZQHS, 55. See also the discussion in Chapter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
14. See the notes underneath Cai Jing’s Qin *Listening* poem in Chapter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
15. According to the description of Zheng Minzhong (2003: 27), a curator at the Beijing Palace Museum who might have a chance to examine the painting closely, the seven strings are not drawn on the painting. But fig. 1.2c clearly reveals seven white lines depicted on the *qin*. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
16. GY 1.21, 22-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
17. *Yunyan guoyan lu* 2.61. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
18. The desk on which the *qin* rests is no ordinary object. It should help with rather than weaken the sound of the *qin.* Thus, the timbre used to make the desk and the shape of the desk are also very important. Personal communication with Yang Yuanzheng, January 22, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
19. Harrist 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
20. Harrist 1995, figs. 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, and 1.10, n.p.; see also pp. 38-44. I follow Robert Harrist’s translations of the names of the places. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
21. Harrist 1995: 106–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
22. Wu Gou 2015: 129-30. See also Hansen 1996a and 1996b; Murray 1997; Tsao 2003; Ihara 2001 and Ihara ed. 2012. This prosperous city may be the capital or an imagined city. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
23. For the descriptions of activities that took place in tea shops see Zhu Chongsheng 1985: 65–8; Cheng Guangyu 1988a: 57–9; Yi Yongwen 2005: 193–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
24. For the Hebei Xuanhua area, see Zhangjiakou Shi Xuanhua Qu Wenwu Baoguansuo 1995; Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo et al. 1996; Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 2001. For the Henan Yiyang area, see Luoyang Shi Dier Wenwu Gongzuodui and Yiyang Xian Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1996. For the Henan Yuzhou Baisha area, see Su Bai 2002. For the Henan Luoning area, see Li Xianqi and Wang Liling 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
25. Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 2001: 13-4; plate nos. 1, 22, 41, 60, 66, 68, 77, 78, 81, 82, 98, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
26. Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 2001: 1-22, and all plates. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
27. Li Xianqi and Wang Liling 1993: 33, 38. Luoyang Shi Dier Wenwu Gongzuodui and Yiyang Xian Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1996 : 47-8, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
28. Qian Shilin ed. 1989: 120-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
29. Ceramic paintings that present comprehensive narratives did not appear until the Yuan dynasty. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
30. QSS 3:165.1868. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
31. See Huang Tingjian or Qin Guan’s wordplay of tea in the song, *Tea, to the Tune “Fragrance All Over the Garden”* (*Mantingfang – cha*) in QSC, vol. 1: 386. See Zhou Yukai 1999 and Egan 1994: 170, 173-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
32. Li Zehou 1989: 171. Ronald Egan’s (1994: 178) translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
33. QSS 14:791.9158. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
34. QSS 14:791.9160. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
35. QSS 14:826.9562. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
36. QSS 14:826.9567. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
37. *Shizhou shihua* 3.167-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
38. SS 11:155.3616-20. He Zhongli 2007: 185, 189-90, 195-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
39. SS 11:155.3616-22. *Shizhou shihua* 3.167-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
40. QSS 14:791.9159. *Shizhou shihua* 3.167-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
41. Yang Wanli’s *Chengzhai shihua*, 729. See also the comments of Qing dynasty scholars Wang Shihan and Ji Yun in Sichuan Daxue Zhongwenxi Tang Song Wenxue Yanjiushi ed. 1994, vol. 5: 1851, 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
42. See also Egan’s translations of the previous two poems, Egan 1994: 171–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
43. QSS 17:984.11358. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
44. Words of the rhyme group *-o* (*yúyun* 魚韻) did not rhyme with words of the rhyme group *-u* (*yúyun* 虞韻) in the Tang-Song periods to the strictest sense. See Mei Zulin 2001: 3. But they were euphonies and shared very similar vowels, at least to the ears of the Tang-Song poets. Evidence is that authors of the rhyme dictionaries argued vehemently to keep apart the two groups, implying that many contemporaries mixed up the two rhyme groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
45. QSS 14:811.9388. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
46. Egan 1994: 172-3; 407, note 8. Huang Tingjian’s replying poem was, *Heda Zizhan* (QSS 17:984.11358). Then Su replied with *Ciyun Huang Luzhi chimu* (QSS 14:810.9384). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
47. The other was *Zizhan yi Zixia Qiuming jianxi liaofu xida* (QSS 17:984.11358). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
48. QSS 17:984.11358-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
49. Gu Bai 1980: 67-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
50. Gu Bai 1980: 67-70; Egan 1994: 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
51. Ronald Egan is not fully aware of the sophistication of the rhyme pattern of these poems, see Egan 1994: 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
52. Huang was famous for his oppository style (“*aoti*”) and oppository prosodic pattern in his poems. I revised David Palumbo-Liu’s translations of *aoti* (unregulated style) to emphasize the connotations of “*ao*”. Huang’s “*ao*” was to be opposite to the prosodic requirements. See Palumbo-Liu 1993: 134-5. See alsoWang Li 1979: 63-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
53. Mei Zulin 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
54. Ouyang Xiu sent Mei Yaochen the poem *Chang xincha cheng Shengyu* (Mei Yaochen)in 1058 and Mei replied with the poem *Ciyun he Yongshu* Chang xincha *zayan*. See QSS 6:288.3646 and QSS 5:259.3262. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
55. See Zhou Yukai 1999; Egan 1994: 169-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
56. QSS 14:981.11342. The canopy-scent from the south of the River might be made with the “Method of Scenting the Canopy of Li Yu, Ruler of the South of the River” mentioned in Chapter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
57. QSS 14:811.9387. The aromatic substance in this poem exists in the form of a stick, which is very much like the incense-stick used widely today. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
58. The two sets of poems, which are not reproduced in this book, can be found in QSS 14:981.11342 and QSS 14:811.9387. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
59. QSS 14:981.11342. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
60. The tonal pattern of the first poem of Huang 3 followed the first poem of Su 2 because they were all about drinking beer. The second poem of Huang 3 followed the second poem of Su 1 because they were about burning incense sticks (the second poem of Su 2 was about painting, so it was less relevant). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
61. The matchings of the tonal patterns and rhyme-resonations could not have been coincidental. We can compare them to the matching of the two poems by Huizong and Cai Jing on the *Literati Gathering*. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
62. See Egan 1994: 169-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
63. See how other scholar-artists’ images were constructed, Egan 1994: 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
64. QSS 14:831.9627. For Shen Zun’s life, see Wang Anshi’s essay in QSW 65:1419.235. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
65. See Zhang Huaying 2013: 498, table 5–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
66. QSW 35:739.115-6. For a translation of this essay, see Egan 1984: 215–7 – *The Old Drunkard’s Pavilion*. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
67. QSW 31:663.136-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
68. QSS 5:257.3193. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
69. QSS 6:287.3633-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
70. QSS 6:288.3641. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
71. QSS 5:258.3229. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
72. QSW 34:718.93. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
73. QSS 14:831.9627. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
74. QSW 91:1974:54. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
75. QSS 17:1017.11600. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
76. QSC, vol. 3: 1939. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
77. QSS 5:257.3193. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
78. QSS 14:831.9627. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
79. QSS 14:831.9627. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
80. QSS 14:831.9627. Since Zequan and Zhu Changwen, and probably their contemporary *qin* educators, had disagreements about the definitions of the categories of the *qin* melodies (see Chapter 1), the *cao* in Su’s title does not match with the *diaozi* format defined by Zequan. Here we will follow Zequan’s claim that Su’s lyrics fit into the category of *diaozi*. Cui Xian also changed the name of the *qin* melody from *yín* to *cao* to signify the differences. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
81. ZQHS, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
82. How the *qin* song lyrics and melodies contributed to the writing of *ci* is a topic worth detailed study. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
83. QSS 17:1017.11600. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)